Karl Barth Society NEWSLETTER *Number 33 Fall 2006*

Barth Society will meet in Washington, D.C. November 17-18, 2006

Our meeting in Washington will feature a Friday afternoon session from 4:00 P.M. to 6:30 P.M. and a Saturday morning session from 9:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. The presenters for the Friday afternoon session will be **Philip G. Ziegler, Lecturer in Systematic Theology, University of Aberdeen**, whose lecture is entitled: "**Taken Out of Context: Freedom and Concreteness in the Theology of Wolf Krötke,**" and **Wolf Krötke, Professor of Systematic Theology** at the **Humboldt University** in **Berlin** whose lecture is entitled: **"Barth on the Theology of the Religions".** This session is listed as **AM17-109** in the AAR program and will be held in **CC-101**. The **Saturday morning** session will be held in **RW-Renaissance West B** and is listed in the AAR program as **AM18-39** and will feature a lecture by **Walter Lowe** of **Emory University** entitled: **"Apocalyptic and Discipleship: Explaining Christianity,"** and presentations by **George Hunsinger, Princeton Theological Seminary, Archie Spencer, Northwest Baptist Seminary, Canada** and **David Bentley Hart** (invited) on the theme entitled: **"The *Analogia Entis* Makes a Come-Back: David Bentley Hart".**

The Board will meet for breakfast on Sunday morning as usual.

The First Annual Karl Barth Conference: *"Thy Word is Truth": Reading Scripture Theologically with Karl Barth*, was held at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, from May 21 to May 24, 2006.

The Conference was sponsored jointly by: *THE CENTER FOR BARTH STUDIES*, **Princeton Theological Seminary**, *THE KARL BARTH SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA* and *SPECIAL COLLECTIONS*, **Princeton Theological Seminary** and was, by all accounts, a great success.

The audio recordings of the five main lectures from the Conference are now available for purchase.

- *Barth's Lectures on the Gospel of John*, John Webster, University of Aberdeen (ID# 7558)
- *'Living Righteousness': Barth and the Sermon on the Mount*, A. Katherine Grieb, Virginia Theological Seminary (ID# 7560)
- *The Heart of the Matter: Karl Barth's Christological Exegesis*, Paul Dafydd Jones, University of Virginia (ID# 7556)
- *'Thy Word is Truth': The Role of Faith in Reading Scripture Theologically with Karl Barth*, Paul Molnar, St. John's University (ID# 7559)
- *The Same Only Different: Barth's Interpretation of Heb. 13:8,* George Hunsinger, Princeton Theological Seminary (ID# 7557)

The CD-ROMS are $5.00 each. For more information or to place an order, write or call:

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P.O. Box 821
Princeton, NJ 08542-0803

1-800-622-6767 ext. 7900
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Fax: 609-497-7962/Email: media@ptsem.edu

Below is a picture of the main speakers which was taken on the last day of the Conference and kindly provided by **I. John Hesselink**, **Emeritus Professor of Theology** at **Western Seminary** in **Holland, Michigan**.

The presenters were (from left to right): **Paul D. Molnar**, **St. John's University,** Queens, New York, **John Webster**, King's College, **University of Aberdeen**, Aberdeen, Scotland, UK, **George Hunsinger**, **Princeton Theological Seminary**, Princeton, New Jersey, **A. Katherine Grieb**, **Virginia Theological Seminary**, Alexandria, Virginia, and **Paul Dafydd Jones**, **University of Virginia**, Charlottesville, Virginia.

There were four discussion groups that met on Monday and Tuesday afternoons to discuss not only the lectures, but other topics of interest. There were also after dinner talks each evening of the conference. One of the more memorable talks was given by **David Demson**, Emeritus Professor at the **University of Toronto**. He was invited by George Hunsinger (Sunday evening's speaker) to give an impromptu talk about the history of the Barth Society and did so with many interesting facts, great expertise and humor. Other after dinner talks included one by **J. Muis** of the **Universiteit Utrecht**, The Netherlands and another by **D. J. Smit**, **Universiteit Stellenbosch**, South Africa. Each of the days featured worship in Miller Chapel led by **Clifford Anderson** (Monday), **George Hunsinger** (Tuesday) and **Darrell Guder** (Wednesday). On Monday afternoon the BBC interview with Karl Barth was shown. On Tuesday afternoon there was a **Younger Scholars Panel** with presentations by **Clifford Anderson**, **John Drury** and **John Flett**, all of **Princeton Theological Seminary.** All in all this conference not only offered much that was of scholarly interest but it provided an important occasion for fellowship and networking with scholars from around this country and around the world.

We look forward to the ***Second Annual Barth Conference*** which is entitled **"Foes or Fellow-Travelers? Karl Barth and American Evangelicalism"** and is scheduled to be held once again at **Princeton Theological Seminary from June 24-27, 2007**.

The following superb excerpt was kindly provided by **George Hunsinger** of **Princeton Theological Seminary**:

After Luther:
How Barth Socialized the Evangelical "As"
George Hunsinger

[This is an excerpt from a longer essay slated to appear in a forthcoming volume of Reformed perspectives on the doctrine of justification, edited by Joseph Burgess and Michael Weinrich (Eerdmans 2007)].

In working out his ethics of justification, Luther restricted what I have called the evangelical "as" -- "Live in love, *as* Christ loved us and gave himself up for us" (Eph. 5:2) -- to the private sphere. For him, the injunction to show kindness toward others with their moral weaknesses and failings, as Christ had done toward us, pertained only to private or interpersonal relations, or to the spiritual realm of faith and Christian community. It did not directly carry over into secular government or political affairs. A different calculus was in order there — one less generous, more limited and more severe. Social ideals inspired by the gospel, like forgiveness, equality and nonretaliation, did not apply in the public domain, where the attempt to realize them could only go awry. Luther's famous opposition between the law and the gospel (with its obvious Augustinian roots) led him to posit a dichotomy between the secular and the spiritual realms.

When the secular realm was redefined by Barth as falling under the lordship of Christ, it became possible for him to socialize the evangelical "as." While he did not make that move in his 1938 essay, he went on to make it elsewhere. He followed the exact logic of Luther's ethics while extending it into the sphere of social and political responsibility. He reasoned by analogy from justification to justice. In his hands, the doctrine of justification led to a Reformation version of what Latin American theologians would later call "God's preferential option for the poor."

Like Luther, Barth argued that for lost sinners the righteousness of God meant both mercy and judgment. Insofar as the sinner was condemned and put to death, God's righteousness meant the awfulness of judgment. But insofar as the sinner was justified by grace and endowed with the blessing of faith, God's righteousness meant the primacy of mercy.

Righteousness was a predicate that defined who God was, both in himself and for us. Barth wrote:

> God is righteous in himself, always doing what befits him and is worthy of himself, defending and glorying in his divine being. He does this also when he makes himself to be our righteousness. He procures right for those who in themselves have no righteousness, indeed for those whose righteousness he discloses as unrighteousness. He does not leave them to themselves. On the contrary, he gives himself to them in his own divine righteousness. Against their merit and worth, and solely by his own merit and worth, he makes himself to be the ground on which . . . they can truly stand and live. (II/1, 387 rev.)

God's righteousness, according to Barth, embraced both retributive and restorative aspects. It slayed in order to make alive, and it made alive by slaying. The selfsame sinner who was abolished in Christ was restored with him from the grave. In his death Christ was made one with the condemned, while in his resurrection he triumphed as their hope. His union with them was at once vicarious and yet real. In an unparalleled, apocalyptic transaction, retribution had been justly carried out even as the sinner was restored to new life. God had not compromised his righteousness one whit while still causing his mercy to prevail. For Barth there was no *iustitia restitutiva* that was not retributive, and no *iustitia retributiva* that was not restorative. In the judgment of divine grace, the condemned sinner became a new creature who had been done away with in order to be made new.

From this astonishing affirmation of God's righteousness in the service of his mercy — the divine indicative — there followed, Barth believed, a social imperative. God's work of mercy implied "a very definite political problem and task" (II/1, 386). God had intervened on behalf of lost sinners despite the end they deserved. From one standpoint, the forgiven sinner simply represented human misery as seen in all who were weak and defenseless, all who were helpless and in distress (cf. Rom. 5:6). God's mercy toward sinners had consequences for all other, if lesser, needs. Barth noted that God's concern for the harassed and oppressed people of Israel — and in Israel "especially the poor, the widows and orphans, the weak and defenseless" (II/1, 396) — had foreshadowed God's intervention on the cross.

The God of the Bible was a God of righteous mercy who took human misery to heart, entered into it himself, and overcame it from within (II/1, 369). Reasoning from the greater to the lesser, Barth concluded:

> To establish justice for the innocent who are threatened and the poor, the widows, the orphans and the strangers who are oppressed . . . God stands at every time unconditionally

> and passionately on this and only on this side: always against the exalted and for the lowly, always against those who already have rights and for those from whom they are robbed and taken away. (II/1, 386 rev.)

God's concern for those in distress could not be taken seriously, Barth wrote, "without feeling a sense of responsibility in the direction indicated" (II/1, 386). A definite political attitude was established by God's work of mercy. The believer "justified by Christ's blood" (Rom. 5:9) was made responsible "to all those who are poor and wretched." The believer was summoned to show mercy as he or she had received mercy, and therefore "to espouse the cause of those who suffer wrong" (II/1, 387). Why? Because in them it was made manifest what he or she was in the sight of God — a person in need of mercy that rectified wrong (II/1, 387). A solidarity in need connected believers to the poor and oppressed.[1]

The justified sinner therefore

> knows that justice — every rightful claim which one human being has against another or others — enjoys the special protection of the God of grace. As surely as [the believer] lives by the grace of God, he cannot avoid this claim. He cannot avoid the problem of human rights. He can only will and affirm a state which is based on justice. By any other attitude he rejects the divine justification. (II/1, 387 rev.)

Divine justification meant mercy toward those in need. It meant that God had not only dealt with our sin, but had looked from our sin to our suffering, from our guilt to our bondage, and from our arrogance to our folly (II/1, 371). It meant that our negation of God's affirmation had been negated by grace so that our liberation and restoration prevailed. Justification meant the removal of injustice, the prevailing of mercy, the restitution of the sinner, and the imperative of justice for the oppressed.

The judgment scene in Matt. 25:31-46, pointed in the same direction. Especially important was v. 40: *As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me* (ESV mar.). "This is the Magna Carta of all Christian humanitarianism and Christian politics," noted Barth (III/2, 508). It indicated where Jesus could be found on earth. He was present, though hidden,

> in all who are now hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick and in prison. Wherever in the present time between the resurrection and the *parousia* one of these is waiting for help (for food, drink, lodging, clothes, a visit, assistance), Jesus himself is waiting. Wherever help is granted or denied, it is granted or denied to Jesus himself. For these are the least of his brothers and sisters. They represent the world for which he died and rose again, with which he has made himself supremely one, and declared himself in solidarity. (III/2, 507-508 rev.)

When Christ died for our sins, he had made the sufferings of the world his own. He had personally identified himself with all who were suffering and in need, so that in them he was now at hand. Those who received Christ by faith were called into conformity with his compassion. They were "to be affected by the concrete miseries of the world." Through their union with Christ, they were given a certain share in his work. They were not to pass by on the other side. They were called to be "simply and directly human." How could they love Christ without being devoted to the poor and needy whom he loved? In serving them, they served him, even as they themselves were served by him.

Barth wrote:

> It is to be noted that those who are righteous and therefore justified at the last judgment do not know with whom they really have to do when they act with simple humanity (v. 37f.) . . . . They had helped the least of his brothers and sisters, they had helped the world in its misery for its own sake. They had no ulterior motive. As the true community of Jesus, they saw the need and did what they could without any further design or after-thoughts. They could not do their duty or fulfill their mission without realizing their solidarity with those in affliction and standing at their side. . . . They were simply concerned with human beings as human beings, and therefore treated them as brothers and sisters. If they had not done so, they could not have claimed Jesus as their Brother or God as their Father. (III/2, 508 rev.)

At least two points in Barth's interpretation of Matt. 25:31-46 require comment. (i) Who are "the least" in this parable? (ii) In the Last Judgment how are works related to faith? (i) In much traditional interpretation

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[1] Cf. Barth's interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan: "The lawyer's first need was to see that he himself is the man fallen among thieves and lying helpless by the wayside. . . . He has to be found and treated with compassion by the Samaritan, the foreigner, whom he believes he should hate. . . ." (I/2, 418).

(including Luther and Calvin) as well as in some contemporary interpretation, the "least" in this parable are seen as members of Christ's community. The reason why help is offered to Christ when it is offered to them is because they are united to Christ by faith. Barth need not object to this interpretation unless it is meant to be restrictive. He has already established that there is a pattern of distinction-in-unity and unity-in-distinction between believers and the wretched of the earth. Just as Christ died not for our sins only but for the sins of the whole world (I John 2:2), so he has made himself one not with believers only, but with all those in distress. (ii) Barth takes Matt. 25:31-46 as it stands. According to the passage, and in Barth's interpretation, works of mercy play a decisive role in the Last Judgment. He of course presupposes, but does not here state, the standard Reformation position (usually worked out in connection with Rom 2:6-10) that persons are saved by faith not by works, but that saving faith is not without works, so that the works in question here have the status of being signs of saving faith. Faith is logically prior to kindness but cannot exist without it. Where there is no kindness there is no faith, even though kindness does not belong to the definition of saving faith.

In spelling out the ethics of justification, it is noteworthy how closely Barth followed Luther.

- Like Luther, Barth urged that love for Christ meant loving those whom Christ loved. Conformity to Christ was the ground of benevolence toward those in need.
- Like Luther, he believed that this conformity made love's scope universal. No one was outside the bounds of Christ's love.
- Like Luther (though perhaps more pointedly), he saw that conformity to Christ involved a certain bias. The poor and needy were commended as the primary recipients of benevolence. Moreover, in some sense benevolence always aimed toward the rectification of injustice.[2]
- Like Luther (though perhaps less pointedly), he stressed that neediness took precedence over merit. The justified were called to alleviate suffering without regard to the deserts of those in need.
- Like Luther, he noted that believers were called to act gratuitously. They were to have no ulterior motives, whether for temporal or eternal gain.
- Like Luther, he saw benevolence as both an end in itself and a means to the end of witness. Benevolence was intrinsically valuable in itself even as it pointed to something greater, namely, God's incomparable grace to lost sinners.
- Finally, like Luther, he saw that the evangelical "as" established a principle of solidarity between believers and those in need. No superiority was implied of believers, or inferiority of the needy, when help was extended and received.

In short, with respect to the ethics of justification, Barth and Luther were in basic agreement on the imperative of benevolence. They agreed about its ground, its scope, its bias, its priorities, its motivation, and its purpose. They also agreed about the moral status of its agents and recipients.[3]

They differed, however, on the question of wide applicability. Where Luther set the spiritual and the secular realms in basic opposition, Barth placed them in a pattern of distinction-in-unity and unity-in-distinction. He radically reconfigured Luther's two-realms idea without abandoning it completely.

For Luther the two realms were like two circles sitting side by side with no overlap. The one was centered in Christ; the other, in human self-seeking. The one was governed by mutuality, the other by coercion. The primary threat to secular society was anarchy rooted in self-seeking. Therefore, the primary purpose of secular government was to maintain order by means of the sword. The best hope for mitigating the harshness of the secular realm, with its stubborn inequalities and injustices, lay in the existence of godly princes, magistrates and citizens. Fairness in the dispensation of secular justice was more nearly a matter of persons than of institutions.

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[2] An asymmetry exists here, which Barth took for granted. God's act of mercy had rectified injustice by doing away with the offending sinner for the sake of restoring him to new life. Rectification of the sinner by death and resurrection, being christocentric and apocalyptic in its execution, was obviously incomparable and unrepeatable. By contrast, human acts of mercy could only imperfectly rectify injustice (and remove misery) by intervening on behalf of the sufferers. Such rectifying human acts were imperative regardless of their limitations, and were similar to the divine mercy despite their great dissimilarity. Whether divine or human, and however variously, mercy involved the rectification of injustice.

[3] This status was always categorical before it was a matter of gradations or distinctions. Categorically, whether as agents or recipients, all were somehow variously sinners who were nonetheless the objects of divine mercy. Their dignity was conferred on them from without by grace (cf. justification). Within this egalitarian category there could then be various distinctions. Different agents might have differing obligations, for example, different recipients might have differing claims to beneficence, and some persons (whether agents or recipients) might have more moral integrity than others (cf. sanctification).

For Barth, by contrast, the two realms were like two concentric circles, whose common center was Christ. The inner circle was the community of Christians, the outer circle the community of citizens. While neither was immune to the corruptions of self-seeking, both were under the sway of Christ's lordship, though in different ways. The purpose of secular government was not merely negative but positive, not merely to prevent anarchy by means of coercion but also to establish a measure of liberty, equality and justice. The public good did not depend only on persons but also on institutions, which could be fashioned into parables, however distant, of God's kingdom. Because Christ was secretly the Lord of the secular realm, possibilities were constantly to be sought even now, regardless of how dire the situation, for making institutional arrangements less harsh and more human.

> In secular society, Barth maintained, the church should stand for social values consistent with the gospel. The needs of concrete human beings should be placed over abstract causes. The rule of law and constitutionality should be upheld. The socially and economically disadvantaged should be given priority. Freedom of conscience, speech and religion should be protected. The right to vote for all adult citizens, regardless of race, creed, sex or class, should be established by law. Separation of powers (legislative, executive, judicial) should be institutionalized. The larger social good should take precedence over narrow, parochial interests (in particular, over those of the wealthy and powerful). War and political violence should be legitimate only as a last resort.

Churches' Center for Theology and Public Policy will meet November 16, 2006

The **Churches' Center for Theology and Public Policy** will meet just one day prior to our first meeting of the **Barth Society**, that is, on **November 16, 2006 at 7 P.M.** at **Asbury United Methodist Church**, near the **Convention Center**, in **Washington D.C.** This year's speaker will be **George Hunsinger** of **Princeton Theological Seminary**. He will give the **Wedel Lecture** and his talk is entitled: **"Torture: Recent Perspectives in Christian Ethics"**. Those interested may contact **Rich Killmer, Program Director** for further information: KILLMERRP@aol.com.

The ***T. F. Torrance Theological Fellowship*** will meet at the Washington Convention Center, Room 153 from 1-3:30 P.M. on Friday, November 17th. **Victor Shepherd**, Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology, **Tyndale Seminary, Toronto** will deliver an address on the theme: **"The Torrances and the Logic of the Reformation."**

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE KARL BARTH SOCIETY

Dear Friends,

Your response to my appeal last year was most encouraging. Simply by paying your dues, you made it possible for our Society to do some things that would not otherwise have been possible. In May 2006 we had a wonderful conference in Princeton on Barth's interpretation of scripture: "Thy Word is Truth." The papers from this event, which was co-sponsored by the Princeton Barth Center and the KBSNA, will be published by Eerdmans. Your dues enabled us to bring in the speakers we needed for this event.

We now have another conference scheduled for June 2007 on "Karl Barth and Evangelicalism." Please consider writing a check right away for your dues again for this year. With a very limited budget, we need to make these new Barth conferences in Princeton as successful as possible. Your dues will go directly to helping us defray our expenses—both for the conference as well as for our meeting at the AAR. Thank you.

Sincerely,
George Hunsinger,
President, KBSNA

ANNUAL BARTH SOCIETY DUES

Everyone interested in joining the **Karl Barth Society of North America** is invited to become a member by sending your name, address (including email address) and annual dues of $15.00 ($10.00 for students) to:

Professor Paul D. Molnar
Editor, KBSNA Newsletter
Division of Humanities—Bent Hall
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Email: molnarp@stjohns.edu

Checks **drawn on a U.S. bank** should be made payable to the **Karl Barth Society of North America**